The presence of and interaction between Christianity and Islam has far deeper roots in East Asia than Australasia, but in the twenty-first century there are many parallel issues across the vast region. Some represent stories of successful engagement, although these are tempered by certain pressing challenges.

Historical background: first encounters

East Asia

It is a more straightforward task to find evidence of the arrival and establishment of Christianity and Islam in East Asia than it is to pinpoint the earliest contacts between the two faiths in this region. With the death of Muḥammad in 632 the new faith expanded rapidly across North Africa, advanced into southern Europe, and made its way to West and Central Asia. In addition to the sweeping military campaigns of the Umayyad dynasty (661–750), diplomatic, trade and social contacts were key factors in this expansion. The Umayyads sent about 17 envoys to the court of the Chinese Tang Dynasty (618–907) (Nakahara 1984: 1–2), and this led to the emergence of communities of Arabs and Persians in various Chinese cities.

Christianity also reached China during the Tang Dynasty, brought by Persian Nestorian Christians, as suggested by the Nestorian Stele monument dated to 781 and carrying both Chinese and Syriac writing (Keevak 2008). This community did not survive, however, and notwithstanding the presence of Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Christianity did not consolidate its presence in China until the surge in Western missionary activity from the late eighteenth century. In contrast, Islam flourished, especially during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), with the emergence of a significant community of 100,000 Muslims by the seventeenth century in Nanjing.

While these early Christian and Muslim presences left evidence of contact with the Chinese court and Chinese populations, little can be said about direct interaction between these two minority groups. This is characteristic of Asian populations, such as Japan, Korea and Vietnam, where neither Christianity nor Islam was in the majority. In contrast, Christian–Muslim interaction in communities where one or the other of these faiths was in the majority leaves more discernible traces. In south east Asia, Persian Nestorian Christians established communities in Barus, West...
Sumatra, and on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula from around the seventh century (Ruck 1997: 215). As in China, this early Christian community did not survive. Trade and diplomatic contacts between the Islamic world and China impacted south-east Asia, which lay on the trade routes. There is ample evidence of visits by Muslims to south-east Asia while en route for China between the seventh and thirteenth centuries; however, direct interaction between Christians and Muslims in south-east Asia during this early period of Hindu and Buddhist predominance was less frequent than interaction between each of these faiths and the Hindu-Buddhist majority.

The fourteenth to sixteenth centuries represent the watershed phase for shaping south-east Asia as we know it today. During this period Muslim-majority communities were established in the Malay-Indonesian world, while the Philippines islands were gradually Christianised by the newly arriving Spanish. Islamisation and Christianisation in adjacent regions in south-east Asia were taking place simultaneously, leading to inevitable rivalry and conflict. Early traces of south-east Asian communities under Muslim authority appear in the northern tip of Sumatra and the east coast of the Malay Peninsula.

The sultanate of Samudera-Pasai was active from the late thirteenth century, and around the same time a Muslim community produced an inscription containing legal regulations in what is now the Malaysian state of Terengganu. About a century later, the port city of Malacca embraced Islam and it became a major regional political and economic power, serving as a jumping-off point for Islamisation of neighbouring regions. The classical Malay narrative entitled the Sejarah Melayu (the Malay Annals) paints a portrait of a very cosmopolitan city of Malacca in the fifteenth century, with Catholic and Armenian Christians passing through on diplomatic and trade business to China. Their interaction with the Islamic authorities is a key stage in the emerging Christian-Muslim relationship in the region. Malacca’s heyday as an Islamic sultanate was only to last a little over a century before this port city was captured by the Portuguese in 1511. This heralded the arrival and consolidation of Christianity in the region, which was to continue with the Portuguese loss of the city to the Dutch in 1641.

These centuries, so formative for both Islam and Christianity in the region, provide the earliest evidence we have of the respective sacred texts being used in south-east Asia. The oldest surviving copies of the Qur’an from the region date from the first decade of the seventeenth century and originate from the north Sumatran Sultanate of Aceh and the Sultanate of Johor at the tip of the Malay Peninsula (Riddell 2014: 264). Shortly thereafter, the Dutch produced the first parallel Dutch/Malay Bible, which emerged in various stages from 1628, leading to the complete New Testament being published under Dutch sponsorship in 1662.

Early interactions between Muslims and Christians in south-east Asia were not simply a matter of painting on a new canvas. Rather, each faith community came into the relationship with inherited stereotypes based on Christian-Muslim interaction in other locations in earlier centuries. These stereotypes, largely negative, contributed to the shape of the Christian-Muslim relationship in south-east Asia for centuries to come. The process of consolidation of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world was multifaceted, but a key element involved teaching new Muslim communities about the faith through study of sacred text, commentary on sacred text and the transmission of rich narrative accounts in the form of epic stories. These literary materials were inherited and, in some cases, adapted from materials developed in the Arab and Persian world. So teachings about and attitudes towards non-Muslims contained within the Qur’an, Ḥadīth and legal texts provided points of reference for south-east Asian Muslims as they encountered emerging Christian communities.

The 1603 work Tāj al-salāṭīn (al-Jauhari 1999) produced in Aceh provides an echo of Islamic jurisprudential attitudes towards non-Muslims. Winstedt (1969: 309) captures this well in summarising Section 21 of this work: Infidels under a Muslim ruler may not build or repair hea-
then temples, or ride on horseback or keep arms or wear rings or dress like Muslims or sell spirits,
or drink in public or give their children Muslim names, or live or be buried near Muslims or keen
for their dead or buy the slaves of Muslims or prevent their relations from becoming Muslims.’
Furthermore, the rich narrative epics – the *Hikayat* literature – were translated into Malay and
achieved significant circulation. Examples of these works are the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah*,
which records battles from the time of the prophet against ‘Franks, the Chinese, Ethiopians and
inhabitants of Zanzibar’ (Braginsky 2004: 182).

These battles between the early Muslims and Christians (and others) found echo in other nar-
ratives such as the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, which recounts the resistance of Malacca to the Portuguese
attack and the appeal for assistance to the Caliph in Ottoman Turkey by the Malaccan authorities.
These provide ingredients for the emergence of a south-east Asian *jihād* narrative, with Chris-
tians the adversary. Inherited negative stereotypes were not the preserve of early generations of
south-east Asian Muslims. Indeed, as Christians encountered south-east Asian Muslims they
remembered and sometimes drew direct links with earlier Muslim adversaries. In commenting
that ‘Islam . . . was . . . a familiar enemy now encountered in a new part of the world’, Laffan
(2011: 84) was speaking about the Dutch, but his comments apply equally to the Portuguese and
Spanish. As is observed by Schrieke (1955: I.38), ‘For the inhabitants of the (Iberian) peninsula a
Mohammadan was a “Moor”, an object of abhorrence’.

The six-volume *Suma Oriental* by Portuguese traveller and writer Tomé Pires includes an
account of his stay in Malacca from 1512–15, immediately after the Portuguese capture of the
city. The period in question was barely one generation since the final fall of Muslim Spain in
1492. In a memorable phrase which provides an insight into attitudes encountered in his forma-
tive years, Pires writes that ‘the Moors are cunning and they make themselves masters of countries
by cunning’ (Cortesão 1944: 173).

The sixteenth century saw the Spanish consolidating their presence in the Philippines, with
their efforts devoted to establishing political and economic control as well as evangelising local
populations – some of which were also in the early stages of Islamisation, especially in the south-
ern Philippines. This competition for souls between Christians and Muslims triggered a signifi-
cant amount of military conflict. An example is related in the *Relación de la isla de Burney*
written by Francisco de Sande, Governor General of the Philippines (1574–80), recounting his conquest
of the Sultanate of Brunei, which stood in the way of Spanish expansion and was a key agent in
the Islamisation process in the southern islands.

The arrival of the Dutch in south-east Asia at the turn of the seventeenth century raised the
stakes in Christian–Muslim conflict. Competition between the Dutch and the Sultanate of Hitu
in the Moluccas for the lucrative trade in cloves triggered a war from 1641 to 1646. An account is
recorded in *Hikayat tanah Hitu*, written by Sifa Rijali, the Imam of Hitu, who speaks the language of
*jihād* against the infidel, with the outcome reflecting the will of Allāh. In similar vein, Enci’ Amin,
the author of the Malay poem *Syair Perang Mengkasar* about the war between the Dutch and the
Macassarese (1666–69), praises the Sultan of Macassar as a perfect and holy being while dismissing
the Christian Dutch as ‘infidels’ and ‘devils’. Echoing such negative stereotypes are Dutch mission-
ary writings of 1622 (Laffan 2011: 73), which state: ‘[Muḥammad] was an Arab trader, and also the
leader of a number of thieves, robbers and murderers, and . . . other blasphemers and seducers’.

Such mutual negative portrayals were replicated across the centuries. A relevant text from the
eighteenth century at the time of Dutch expansion in Java is *Kitab Usulbiyah*, written by Ratu
Pakubuwana, the wife of the Javanese ruler, who reports God as providing Muḥammad with an
unusual perspective on Christians:

O Muḥammad, know that the Christians rather resemble father Adam in appearance.
What distinguishes the Christians is that their arms branch out and they are constantly
Douglas Pratt and Peter Riddell

urinating. They wear a pair of trousers and do not loosen their jackets, with headgear of old gold; these are the clothes of Christians. They use a constant fragrance to conceal their stink. The rotting stink might spread of the bodies of the devils and the Christians (so it is) concealed with fragrance. Enemies of Jesus are these Christians, their forces lions and gibbons and all the demons and devils.

(Ricklefs 1998: 68)

Reinforcing such negative perspectives are other works which can be classified as jihād literature. These include the Hikayat Prang Sabil from the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries, as well as fatwā literature, or judicial opinions, issued from Mecca by prominent religious authorities or families, which call on south-east Asian Muslims to overthrow their infidel colonial masters (Kaptein 1997). Meanwhile, perspectives on Islam by colonial Christian writers tended to assess the Islam they encountered according to a perceived pristine textual form of the faith. Laffan’s (2011: 121) assessment of the Dutch writings on Islam in Indonesia concludes that many Dutch missionaries ‘saw a chance for Christianizing the natives given what appeared to them as the natives’ weak understanding and practice of Islam. . . . If anything was clear by 1888, it was that Dutch knowledge of Islam was outdated and far too oriented towards texts above contexts’.

The famous Dutch orientalist and advisor on Islamic affairs to the Dutch colonial government in Indonesia, Snouck Hurgronje, was to represent a significant turning point in his own deep engagement with Islam and his efforts to train Dutch colonial staff to allow Islam to speak for itself, rather than be measured against a textual ideal. According to Laffan, Hurgronje advocated ‘greater patience with, attention to, and even respect for Islam’ (Laffan 2011: 161). World War II triggered the end of the colonial presence in East Asia, and new nation states emerged. Key for our purposes are the emergence of Indonesia in 1945 and Malaysia in 1963, both with a Muslim majority, and the Philippines with a majority Christian population in 1946. Independence provided a new dynamic in terms of Christian–Muslim relations, with ample opportunity to move on from old stereotypes in a quest jointly to build the new nations. At the same time, the postwar period witnessed the emergence of other nations which had Christian and Muslim minorities, such as the People’s Republic of China, Vietnam and Singapore.

**Australasia**

From the perspective of Europe in the northern hemisphere, Australia and New Zealand are regarded as the Antipodes. They are also collectively referred to as Australasia. They are both English speaking and, as modern nation states, derive from the era of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British colonialism. They have much in common. Yet they are also two very different countries, with distinctive histories and cultural contexts. Each has its own contours of religious diversity and a distinctive Muslim element within that (Bouma et al. 2010; Pratt 2011). Australia’s modern history began in the late eighteenth century as a penal colony. The land was deemed to be terra nullius, a land empty of people and thus suitable as a location for convicts; the indigenous peoples, the Aborigines, were deemed ‘nonhuman’. By contrast, when the British colonised New Zealand in the early nineteenth century a treaty was enacted with the indigenous people, the Maori. In both cases Christianity arrived with colonising settlement (Piggin and Davidson 2006), and even as their different colonising histories were being played out, Islam arrived in both, albeit relatively incognito at first (Bouma 1997).
The first encounter of Muslims with the Antipodes was with Australia. Indications of ethnic Indonesian interaction with northern Aboriginal groups taking place in the seventeenth century suggest this was the earliest contact of Islam with the Australian continent (Saeed 2004). Some Muslim sailors and prisoners are known to have arrived on convict ships that came out from England during the eighteenth century, then from the middle of the nineteenth century Muslims from Afghanistan and north-western India, known collectively as the ‘Afghans’, began to settle and form small communities. It is from this time that Islam, as represented by a community of Muslims, can be said to have arrived in the country. Indeed, Australia’s first known mosque, in South Australia, was built in 1861 (Bouma 1994; Cleland 2001). The Afghan Muslims came to work the camel trains that plied the Australian deserts, the ‘Outback’. Abdullah Saeed remarks that, on account of the Afghans’ knowledge and expertise with camels, ‘they were credited with saving the lives of numerous early European explorers and were vital for exploration’ (Saeed 2004: 7).

The first Muslims officially recorded in New Zealand were itinerant Chinese working in the gold fields in the South Island during the latter part of the nineteenth century (NZ Government 1875). However, newspaper archival research has indicated the likelihood of a scattering of South Asian Muslims in the early mid-nineteenth century (Drury 2014). Other than Chinese gold miners who happened to be Muslim, during the 1890s and up to World War I there were very few Muslim immigrants to New Zealand other than some Indians, mostly from Gujarat, with a few also from Fiji (Drury 2006; Kolig 2010).

Muslims from Dutch and British colonies in south-east Asia were recruited for the Australian pearling industry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, during much of the first half or more of the twentieth century the White Australia Policy precluded the immigration of many Muslims, although during the interwar period ‘Albanian Muslims were accepted due to their lighter European complexion’ (Saeed 2004: 7). Albanians were also among some of the mid-twentieth century Muslim immigrants to New Zealand. However, for both Australia and New Zealand, Islam was effectively invisible, and Muslims were a negligible minority until the middle of the twentieth century. Immigration was the early primary driver of growth, with the putative openness of these secular societies tempered with varyingly muted hesitancy about the acceptability and compatibility of Muslims within them (Kolig and Kabir 2008).

Following World War II, and with the advent of new migratory patterns reflecting both the aftermath of war and the emerging processes of decolonization, Muslim immigration into both Australia and New Zealand grew in significance. The modern trend to accept diverse Muslim populations got underway, albeit slowly. Notably, between 1967 and 1971 some 10,000 Turkish Muslims arrived and settled, mainly in Melbourne and Sydney (Kabir 2004). Lebanese immigrants to Australia, both Muslim and Christian, have also formed a substantive immigrant bloc, arriving in several waves. Today, the Muslim population in Australia is quite diverse, with approximately 80 per cent being Australian citizens whether by choice or by birth (Saeed 2004). Indeed, there are many different particular Muslim communities, with Muslims having come from over 70 countries (Bouma 1994).

The 1945 New Zealand Census recorded only 67 Muslims in the country (NZ Government 1952). The next four decades saw a slow but steady increase. During the 1990s, as a result of significant change to immigration policy, Muslims from many countries, especially from the Middle East and notably also from Somalia – mainly refugees – began arriving in increased numbers (Shepard 2002). At that time ethnic Indians constituted almost half of the total Muslim population. Since the 1970s immigration has been supplemented with a steady trickle of local converts to Islam, including some indigenous Maoris who, since the success of the nineteenth-century Christian missions, had for the most part been overwhelmingly Christian. Today New Zealand’s
Muslims are ethnically diverse, originating from over 40 countries. Muslims in New Zealand constitute around 1.1 per cent of the total population of some 4.3 million. By contrast, Muslims constitute some 2.2 per cent of the Australian population of over 20 million.

The steady Muslim population growth has led to the formation of a number of Muslim associations, mostly of a regional nature. The Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ), an overarching national body with its office in the capital city, Wellington, was formed in April 1979 (Shepard 2006). There is also a range of Islamic Trusts, Centres, and a few schools throughout the country, as well as seven regional organisations. There are over 100 mosques and some 30 Islamic schools across Australia, with many more prayer rooms of one sort or another. All capital cities have mosques, most being in Sydney and Melbourne. Significantly, most mosques are formally nonsectarian: 'They do not belong to one particular religious group or legal school' (Cleland 2001: 41). Nonetheless, many are coordinated and thus often dominated by the ethnic group that founded the mosque. Indeed, there is a strong tendency in Australia for Muslims to identify and congregate on ethnic lines with, for example, organisations for da‘wa and tahlīgh most often ethnically oriented. There are also now some emerging self-styled Salafi communities – following the Salafism of Saudi Arabia – especially in Melbourne and Sydney.

Each Australian state has Islamic societies of one sort or another, some of which are associated with the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). Also, in each state there is an Islamic Council, which many mosque communities join. All state Islamic Councils are members of the AFIC. In two states, Victoria and New South Wales, there is a Board of Imams, though not all imams are necessarily members. There is no singular united overarching federal or even state Muslim leadership as such, although in 2006 the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) was formed as an umbrella organisation of Councils of Imams of Australian States and Territories. Islam is now an integral part of the Australian landscape, and Islam in Australia is being gradually influenced and shaped by the norms, values and cultural idiosyncrasies of Australian society. Much the same can be said of Islam in New Zealand.

**Intentional dialogical relationships since the 1960s**

The emergence of newly independent states after World War II broadly coincided with significant winds of change affecting the world’s major religions. The discourse of interreligious dialogue came to the fore from the 1960s onwards and had a significant impact on new attitudes to other faiths within the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, and, indeed, some prominent Muslim groups and individuals joined in the new mood of dialogue and discussion. At the same time, rapid political changes combined with increased oil revenues triggered a process of Islamic resurgence across the Muslim-majority world. The twin phenomena of interreligious dialogue and Islamic resurgence were to have an impact on Christian–Muslim relations in East Asia.

Malaysia witnessed emergence of several initiatives in interreligious dialogue, in large part in response to perceived Islamic resurgence. In 1983 the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism was formed. Three years later the Christian Federation of Malaysia was founded, grouping together Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant and evangelical churches, which together represented around 90 per cent of Malaysia’s Christian population. Both of these groups set out to dialogue with the Malaysian government about perceived religious minority disadvantage in the face of increasing government-driven Islamisation. Issues addressed have included the religious rights of non-Muslims, obstacles to the construction of places of worship, the banning of teaching of non-Muslim faiths in schools and the exclusion of non-Muslim programming from the public media. In neighbouring Indonesia, various interfaith dialogue groups have emerged. One of the most prominent is the Institute for Interfaith
Dialogue in Indonesia (INTERFIDEI; www.pluralism.org/profiles/view/74167), established in 1991 to stimulate dynamic networks of interreligious dialogue and cooperation. Though based in Yogyakarta, Interfidei extends its programmes to many regions in the Indonesian archipelago, where it offers short courses on interfaith learning, workshops on conflict resolution and peace building, and other discussion and research activities.

Similarly, the Philippines has witnessed wide-ranging dialogue initiatives as a response to Christian–Muslim conflict in the south at various points since independence. An example is the Silsilah Dialogue Movement (www.silsilahdialogue.com/index.php/en/), founded in Zamboanga City on the island of Mindanao in 1984. This movement was incorporated as a foundation the following year and organises seminars on interfaith dialogue for schoolchildren and gatherings of Muslim and Christian religious education teachers, as well as publishing proceedings of relevant conferences and also joint Christian–Muslim responses to certain emergency situations such as fire and natural calamities through fundraising. Those countries where neither Islam nor Christianity is in the majority sometimes host interreligious events which include Christians and Muslims alongside other faith representatives. For example, an interfaith dialogue was organised in Singapore in January 2012, focusing on contemplative practice in religions and bringing together Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Taoists (www.wccm.org/content/common-ground-interfaith-dialogue-singapore-7-8-jan-2012-1).

The Regional Islamic Da’wah Council of South East Asia and the Pacific (RISEAP) was formed in 1980 with the aim of promoting Islamic identity and Muslim unity within the region. Organisations from some 22 countries, including Australia and New Zealand, are affiliated. The leadership tends to promote respectful intercultural and interfaith dialogue. In both Australia and New Zealand there are many Muslims who are active in local or regional interfaith affairs and multi-faith organisations or networks, many of which were formed in the latter decades of the twentieth century. This activity intensified and diversified in the aftermath of 9/11 and included within Australia the engagement of religious schools in the promotion of dialogical activities (see e.g. Building Bridges through Interfaith Dialogue in Schools Program, https://buildingbridgesmelbourne.wordpress.com/). Federal and state governments in Australia also engaged with the Muslim community and more general interfaith programmes such as ‘Living in Harmony’ grants. And in both countries the Muslim community opened its doors to the wider local society by way of instituting annual mosque open days and Islam Awareness weeks.

The New Zealand Council of Christians and Muslims (CCM) was established in 1997, based in the country’s largest city, Auckland. It holds public gatherings at least four times a year, and on one occasion annually joins with The Council of Christians and Jews. The objects are to promote education, dialogue and mutual understanding and the elimination of religious discrimination and racism. New Zealand Muslims have been participants in the government-sponsored national delegation to the Asia Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue meetings (Pratt 2010). Muslims are also active in a variety of regional interfaith councils and regional and national forums. In the New Zealand context the modality of Christian–Muslim relations has been, and is, primarily one of joint participation in the civic project of interfaith organisations and related activities rather than in bilateral engagement, other than the formally established CCM. In some cities there are ‘Abrahamic’ councils that interlink Jews, Christians and Muslims. This pattern is found in Australia, where there is an even wider range of interfaith as well as bilateral organisations and activities that are inclusive of Muslims and Christians. The Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews was founded in 2003 (www.ncca.org.au/departments/interfaith), and two Fethullah Gülen organisations, Affinity Intercultural Foundation based in Sydney and the Australian Intercultural Society based in Melbourne, are both active in interfaith and Christian–Muslim activities (http://affinity.org.au/ and www.intercultural.org.au/).
countries, dialogical activities mostly attract those who have a personal interest rather than being arranged by appointed representatives. This means that Christian–Muslim relations and dialogue remain a relatively marginalised affair so far as the Christian churches and much of the Muslim communities are concerned.

### Contemporary challenges

In spite of these examples of progress, and following centuries of inherited stereotypes and mutual suspicion, much remains to be done in terms of improving Christian–Muslim relations in East Asia and Australasia. A number of areas of difficulty persist and continue to fuel the creation of walls rather than bridges between followers of the two faiths. In Malaysia, the federal government has stipulated that non-Muslim faiths cannot use the term ‘Allāh’ to refer to the Divinity in their scriptures printed in the national language. This particularly affects Christians who have used this term for God in translations of the Bible into Malay dating back to the first parallel Dutch/Malay Bible published in the early seventeenth century. The case has been taken to all levels of legal appeal, with the decision generally falling in favour of the government’s position. At the time of writing this issue remains a significant bone of contention between Malaysian Christians and the government-sponsored Islamic authorities. It should be noted, however, that some Muslim spokespeople advocate on behalf of the Christian position, while some Christians do not wish to challenge the government, arguing that they prefer not to use the term ‘Allāh’ at all.

In Indonesia, ongoing controversy was triggered by a set of 11 fatwās issued by the seventh congress of the Indonesian Islamic Scholars Council in July 2005. These conservative decisions banned wide-ranging practices and attitudes associated with a more pluralistic mindset, including liberal Islamic thought, religious pluralism, interfaith marriage, interfaith prayers led by non-Muslims and women leading prayers attended by men. They represent one of the fruits of conservative Islamic resurgence that has been sweeping across the Muslim world since the 1970s. At one level this resurgence has greatly impacted intra-Muslim rivalry and conflict, while at another it has added pressure on religious minorities, including Christians. So there has been a discernible increase in physical attacks on Christian churches over the last 20 years reflecting a trend towards greater exclusivist attitudes. In a response that was highly critical of the Indonesian Islamic Scholars Council fatwās, Professor Azyumardi Azra, president of the State Islamic University in Jakarta, commented: ‘This is very disappointing because the fatwās were issued from only [a] Syariah or Fikih or Islamic Jurisprudence point of view without taking into consideration the sociological and political realities of Indonesia’ (‘Fatwas raise concerns of growing divisions’, Radio Australia, www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/onairhighlights/460724).

### Conclusion

It is the advent of Islamist extremism in the context of the twenty-first century that has galvanised much activity in the field of Christian–Muslim relations, both globally and with respect to Australasia. Whether in the context of bilateral, trilateral ‘Abrahamic’ or multifaith organisations, a recurrent theme is the need to improve education and facilitate intercommunal harmony and understanding. Often this is accompanied by a highly charged political environment in which the Muslim community is subject to securitised scrutiny on the part of the state. Although in both countries organs of government engage the Muslim communities, thus far Australia appears better than New Zealand in being able to provide a counterpoint of good social engagement with the Muslim community, so enhancing the climate of acceptability of Christian–Muslim relations. As ever, more could be done.
Christians and Muslims in East Asia

References


**Further reading**


